

August 4, 2001

Local lawmakers plan visit to China

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Two area lawmakers are part of a bipartisan delegation traveling to China today to discuss trade.

U.S. Rep. Mike Honda, D-San Jose, is leading a delegation that includes state Sen. Bruce McPherson in a 10-day jaunt to meet with Chinese government and business leaders.

The goal of the journey is to learn more about business and labor conditions in China.

Honda spokesman Ernest Baynard said crucial issues facing China are coming up in Congress. Among them is the Communist country's bid to enter the World Trade Organization.

Human rights concerns have slowed those efforts.

Baynard said the congressman wants to familiarize himself with the challenges that companies in his district like Hewlett-Packard and Legend Computer face when doing business in China.

Labor leaders and business people are part of the delegation. Aside from business issues, the delegation will seek to learn about human-rights conditions.

"Our district encompasses a lot of the interests at stake in the China trade debate," Baynard said. "Mike wants to learn first-hand about China."

McPherson, who serves on the state Select Committee on International Trade and Development, said trading with China is a reality in today's world.

"I'm most interested in seeing if there are trade and cultural exchanges we can foster," said the Santa Cruz Republican.

He said tough questions will be posed to Chinese leaders about labor and human-rights conditions, though he said the delegation does not officially represent the U.S. government.

"I'll just be interested in their reaction and to see if they plan to improve on those things," he said.

The delegation includes Sens. James Brulte, Liz Figueroa, Dick Ackerman, and Assembly members Elaine Alquist and Ellen Corbett.

McPherson said no state money is being used to fund the trip.

Honda plans to post information about the visit while in China at www.house.gov/honda.

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